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SUBJECT: OBSERVERS SAY NIGERIAN ELECTIONS FLAWED

¶1. Summary: In a series of press conferences, the five main international observation groups said that the Nigerian elections were characterized by poor organization, lacked transparency and were marred by widespread irregularities. The elections, as a result, fell far short of international standards. The Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) and the Commonwealth did not make any sweeping conclusions, but rather detailed a long list of irregularities its observers witnessed. The ECOWAS delegation noted voting and counting irregularities and the Commonwealth delegation referred to the elections as "vexed." The European Union Election Observation Mission, which rendered the bluntest statement concluded that "the elections have not lived up to hopes and expectations of the Nigerian people and the process cannot be considered to have been credible." The International Republican Institute (IRI) noted the elections fell "below the standard set by previous Nigerian elections and international standards," and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) concluded that "the cumulative effect of the serious problems its delegation witnessed substantially compromised the integrity of the electoral process." End Summary.

EUROPEAN UNION: ELECTIONS NOT CREDIBLE  
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¶2. The European Union Election Observation Mission deployed more than 150 observers from 21 countries. The leader of the delegation Max van den Berg had also observed the 2003 elections in Nigeria. In its hard-hitting report, the EU said the elections lacked credibility as a result of "poor organization, lack of transparency, widespread procedural irregularities, significant evidence of fraud, voter disenfranchisement, lack of equal conditions for contestants and numerous incidents of violence." At a press conference on April 23, van den Berg called the group's statement perhaps the toughest ever and blamed INEC and the ruling party for many of the irregularities. He called the announced results "magic" and said the 2007 elections did not measure up to the low standards set in 2003.

¶3. The EU called for a more independent election commission. It noted that INEC's dependence on the executive and its selective application of electoral legislation led to a lack of confidence among election stakeholders. The EU concluded that the performance of the judiciary was one bright spot in an otherwise deeply flawed electoral process.

COMMONWEALTH AND ECOWAS: A LITANY OF IRREGULARITIES  
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¶4. The Commonwealth and ECOWAS delegation statements did not

draw broad conclusions in their statements. Both focused on detailing the long litany of irregularities its observers witnessed. The ECOWAS delegation headed by Dr. Dawda Jawara, former President of Gambia, noted that there were substantive problems which robbed voters of the secrecy of vote, the potential for multiple voting and a lack of accountability for the voting material. The delegation report also noted a litany of logistical problems ranging from a shortage of voting materials to voting booths and that the vote counting was not systematic or timely and led to legitimate concerns "seriously challenging the transparency of the collation and tabulation of elections results."

¶5. The Commonwealth delegation, headed by former Tanzanian Prime Minister Joseph Warioba, said it noted some improvement in the conduct of the second round of elections on April 21, but that both rounds had significant shortcomings. Irregular polling hours, and distribution of polling materials were important problems, as was the lack of accountability of the last minute printing of presidential ballots which lacked serial numbers. Overall INEC's announcement that it needed to redo elections in at least six states was an admission of the impact of problems noted by Nigerian voters and international observers.

#### IRI AND NDI: BELOW ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS AND A STEP BACKWARD

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¶6. IRI said that Nigeria's elections fell below acceptable standards. Its delegation was headed by Ambassador Pierre-Richard Prosper, Abbe Apollinaire Malumalu (President of the Independent Elections Commission in the Democratic Republic of Congo) and Andras Gyurk (a Hungarian member of the European Parliament). The statement noted that the poor election was the cumulative effect of poor preparations starting with voter's registration, and political efforts to "bypass Nigeria's constitutional process to selectively disqualify candidates running for office." IRI concluded that "these elections did not measure up to those observed by the members of IRI's international delegation in other countries whether in Africa, Asia, Europe or the Western hemisphere."

¶7. NDI's delegation, headed by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former Canadian Prime Minister Joe Clark, noted that the electoral process failed the Nigerian people. The cumulative effect of the serious problems of the delegation witnessed substantially compromised the integrity of the electoral process. NDI, like all the international observer groups, noted a long list of electoral irregularities including a failed voter's registration, voter fraud and intimidation and a lack of transparency in tabulations of results. The cumulative impact "represents a step backward in the conduct of elections in Nigeria, and ... threatens to further erode citizen confidence in the country's democratic institutions."

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